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A study of feeding practices of infants in Parbhani district

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ABSTRACT

The study of infant feeding practices was conducted to find out the current feeding practices of infants in rural areas of Parbhani. The effect of socio-economic status of the family and educational status of mothers on feeding practices was observed. The survey of 130 women having the infants of 3-18 months were randomly selected and personally interviewed. It was evident from the results that 46.9 per cent rural mothers were giving the pre-lacteal foods to infants. Foods other than milk, like biscuits, rice with milk, rice with dal, forex, cerelax, chapatti, bread were given to 51.53% infants after six months of age. It was observed that 70.42% of low income group mothers breastfed their infants upto age of 18 months and 82.53% illiterate mothers breastfed their infants up to age of 18 months that means there was direct effect on socio-economic status of the family and educational status of mothers on infant feeding practices.

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Key words : Infant feeding practices, Educational level, Socio-economic status

INTRODUCTION

The word infancy comes from latin language means infans. Infancy period extends from birth to 24 months. Breast feeding is best for infants. Breast milk is the natural food for the infant. The infant should be put to breast within half an hour after normal delivery and within four hours after caesarian sections. Pre-lacteal foods like honey, distilled water or glucose should not be given. These foods will satisfy the thirst and will reduce vigour to suck and may lead to diarrhoea and helmitic infestation. Breast feeding can be initiated even when the mother is sedated or on IV fluids. Sucking reflex is most active at birth. Colostrum is the first immunization to the infant. It contains an interferon like substance which possesses strong antiviral activity (Shrilakshmi, 2002).

Infants thrive on breast milk alone up to six months of life and their growth rate during this period is satisfactory. Breast milk alone is not able to provide sufficient amounts of all the nutrients needed to maintain the growth after first six months.

Weaning means, infants switching over from breast milk to semi liquid/ semisolid foods. The time at which weaning should begin is determined by the lactation

performance of mother and the rate of growth and maturation of the infants. As the child grows older a progressively greater proportion of the energy and nutrient needs to be met by weaning foods rather than breast milk.

The present study was conducted with the objectives as to find out the current feeding practices of infants in Parbhani district and to find out the effect of socio-economic status and educational level of mothers on the infant feeding practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

130 women having the infants of age 3-18 months were randomly selected from the village Brahmangaon of Parbhani District. They were personally interviewed about the general information of the family, socio-economic status, educational level of mothers and infant feeding practices. The collected data were analysed and results are presented in different tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Practice of giving pre-lacteal foods is presented in Table 1. Still the centuries old custom of giving pre-lacteal

foods before the commencement of breast feeding was found to be practiced among 46.9 per cent of rural mothers. Cow's milk with honey and castor oil was the pre-lacteal foods administered to the infants. The reason offered by mother for giving cow's milk with honey and castor oil as a pre-lacteal food for the infant were that, cow's milk keeps baby healthy. Honey makes tongue thin and castor oil cleans the abdomen.

Table 1 : Practice of giving pre-lacteal foods

Particular	No. of infants	Percentage
Yes	61	46.9
No	69	53.0

It is revealed from Table 2 that as the level of education increased *i.e.* from illiterate to High School the percentage of pre-lacteal foods given decreased from 63.49 to 29.11 per cent.

Table 2 : Effect of literacy level on pre-lacteal foods

Level of education	Pre-lacteal foods given		Pre-lacteal foods not given	
	No. of infants	%	No. of Infants	%
Illiterate	40	63.49	23	36.5
Primary	16	32.00	34	68.00
High School	5	29.11	12	70.59

Breast feeding from the first day of delivery is shown in Table 3. The reason for starting the breast feeding from the first day of delivery (98.4%) was due to the advice of doctor.

Table 3 : Breast feeding from the first day of delivery

Particulars	No. of infants	Percentage
Yes	128	98.4
No	2	1.5

Breast feeding was found to be universally practiced by the mother for varying period. It is obvious from the results (Table 4) that the practice of giving breast feeding for the period of 18 months was prevailing among 98.4

Table 4 : Duration of breast feeding

Period of breast feeding	No. of infants	Percentage
18 months	128	98.4
Up to pregnancy	2	1.5

per cent and 1.5 per cent reported that they will feed the baby up to next pregnancy.

Feeding of infants when the mother was suffering from any illness is given in Table 5 From the table it was seen that the breast feeding was continued if the mother was even suffering from any illness the reason they said the unavailability of animal milk in the villages.

Table 5 : Feeding of infants when the mother is suffering from any illness

Suffering from illness	No of infants	Percentage
Yes	111	85.3
No	19	14.6

Feeding pattern of infants of different age groups is shown in Table 6. A decline in breast feeding practice from 70.58 to 37.50 per cent and increase in partial breast feeding practice from 29.41 to 62.5 per cent was noticed with an increase in the age.

Age of introduction of semi-solid foods to the infants is shown in Table 7. Biscuits, rice with milk or dhal, chapatti / bread egg, forex, fruits, vegetables were observed to be common semi-solid and solid foods introduced to infants. Most of the foods were introduced up to age of 18 months. The per cent of infants to whom the semi-solid food were introduced within 6 months of age was 51.53 whereas it was 38.46 during 7 to 9 months, 7.6 after the completion of 1 year and 2.30 was up to 18 months.

Effect of family income on the duration of breast feeding is presented in Table 8. The percentage of infants who were breast fed up to 6 months in low income, middle and high income group was 14.08, 13.04 and 38.46 per cent, respectively. The respective values of infants of the three income groups who were breast fed for seven to 12 months and for 13-18 months were 15.49, 21.73, 38.46 and 70.42, 65.21 and 23.07 only. 23.07 per cent of infants

Table 6 : Feeding pattern of infants of different age group

Sr. No.	Age group	No. of infants	Fully breast feed		Partially breast feed	
			No.	%	No.	%
1.	3-6 months	34	24	70.58	10	29.41
2.	7-9 months	32	16	50.00	16	50.00
3.	10-12 months	26	10	38.46	16	61.53
4.	13-15 months	18	8	44.44	10	55.55
5.	16-18 months	8	3	37.50	5	62.50

Table 7.: Age of introduction of semi solid /solid foods

Age group	No of infants	Percentage
3-6 Months	67	51.53
7-9 Months	50	38.46
After one year	10	7.6
13-18 Months	3	2.3

Table 8 : Effect of family income on the duration of breast feeding

Sr. No	Income group	No. of infants	Infants of different ages (in months)					
			3-6		7-12		13-18	
			No	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Low	71	10	14.08	11	15.49	50	70.42
2.	Middle	46	6	13.04	10	21.73	30	65.21
3.	High	13	5	38.46	5	38.46	3	23.07

Table 9 : Effect of literacy level of mothers on the duration of breast feeding

Sr. No.	Literacy level	No. of infants	Infants of different ages (In months)					
			3-6		7-12		13-18	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Illiterate	63	4	6.34	7	11.11	52	82.53
2.	Primary School	50	12	24.00	13	26.00	25	50.00
3.	High School	17			12	70.58	5	29.41

were breast fed up to age of 13-18 months of age in high income group as compared to low income group. Thus, the duration of breast feeding was found to be more in low income group as compared to middle and high income groups.

Effect of literacy level of mother on the duration of breast feeding is shown in Table 9. The duration of breast feeding was observed to be directly dependent on the literacy level of the mother. In the present study, 82.53 per cent of illiterate mothers breast fed their infants for more than 18 months as against the value of 29.41 of the high school educated mothers.

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